

GERMAN PHILOSOPHY
IN RELATION TO THE WAR

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GERMAN PHILOSOPHY IN RELATION TO THE WAR

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PREFACE

IT goes without saying that for the true understanding of an event like a great war we have to search the depths of the mind of the nations concerned in it ; and, further, that in a country where, as Lange has said, "the apothecary cannot make up a prescription without being conscious of the relation of his activity to the constitution of the universe," we cannot stop short of the course of philosophical speculation that has prepared the way for it in the mind of the governing classes. But there is a special interest attaching to this question in the present case. Most people have a general idea of what is meant by "German Philosophy"; most people, moreover, in this country believe that philosophical ideas have played a decisive part in recent events. But only those familiar with the history of modern thought are aware of the changes that have taken place in the course of the three generations that have passed

since the death of Hegel. There is thus a danger of doing grave injustice to what was in essence a great constructive effort of thought by associating it with the present orgy of violence and ruthless destruction. That the danger is a real one is proved by the fact that before the war was many weeks old letters appeared in *The Times* seeking to discredit the whole movement of German speculation and the higher criticism that to a large degree sprang out of it on precisely this ground. The confusion was pointed out by several writers (among others by myself) at the time. But the subject seemed to me important enough to deserve fuller treatment than was possible in the columns of *The Times*, and the lectures that follow were delivered in this University with that object. That I should be able to give an even passable account of anything so complicated as the movement of thought in Germany in the nineteenth century in so short a space, even though I had been competent to attempt it, was not of course to be expected. What I sought to do was, in the first place, to set the debt which philosophy, and through it civilization, owes to the series of great thinkers from Kant to Hegel in the simplest and clearest light ; secondly, to indicate some of

the chief intellectual influences which have led to the present lamentable falsification of all their ideals ; and lastly (what is perhaps more important than either), to indicate a direction in which, amid much that is dark, our hopes for the future of Germany may be turned with some real confidence in their fulfilment.

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GERMAN PHILOSOPHY IN RELATION TO THE WAR

LECTURE I.

GERMAN IDEALISM

"The greatest achievement of the century in which it saw the light."—CARLYLE.

I.

PHILOSOPHY AND THE WAR.

PROFESSOR J. A. CRAMB, the author of *Germany and England*, has said that it would be possible to treat the wars of 1866 and 1870 so as to make them appear to be the work of professors and historians. If we add philosophers, this might be said *a fortiori* of the present war. Philosophers have held since the time of Plato that metaphysical ideas are not the remote and inert things that they are commonly believed to be, but living forces in the minds of men continually acting upon character and expressing

themselves in action. But they have had little success in convincing the public of this paradox. It is true that recently Mr. G. K. Chesterton has become a convert, and has declared metaphysics to be the most practical of all studies. But this has been discounted as only Mr. Chesterton's fun. And now amid much that is obscure, one thing is certain, that what we see confronting each other throughout the world are not so much armed hosts of men as opposing ideals of life that have their root in divergent theories as to the inner make of the universe and as to human destiny in it.

It is all the more important to ask what precisely these ideas are and whence they came, inasmuch as there have not been wanting attempts to fix the responsibility for the present crisis on what is popularly known as German Philosophy—the speculations of the succession of great thinkers who lived and wrote at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century.¹ What, I believe, can be shown is that these things have come upon us, not because German thought has been faithful to its great philo-

¹ See, e.g., *The Times*, September 21, 1914, letter on the "New Barbarism," signed "Continuity."

sophical tradition, but because it has broken away from its spirit and falsified its results. It is a story, not of a continuous development, but of a reaction—a great rebellion and apostacy. For this country the story has an added interest. For while the course of popular thought in Germany throughout the nineteenth century has been, on the whole, away from the spirit and teaching of the early idealism, in Great Britain it has taken the opposite course, and the most powerful intellectual influence coming from philosophical thinkers, and, through the Universities in the seventies and eighties, moulding the mind of some of the leading statesmen of both parties, was precisely that of the ideas which a German philosophy most in vogue had rejected.¹

II.

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY MATERIALISM.

German philosophy does not, of course, begin with Kant, but it is in Kant that not only modern German, but all modern philo-

¹ The influence of T. H. Green in Oxford and Edward Caird in Scotland was at its height when Mr. Asquith, Lord Haldane, Lord Milner, Lord Curzon, and, later, Sir Edward Grey, were at college.

sophy, may be said to have had its starting-point. He claimed himself to have effected the same kind of revolution in the theory of knowledge as Copernicus had effected in the theory of the heavens. We are here concerned with one aspect of this revolution and its consequences in ethics and politics.

The eighteenth century was one of continuous advance in physical science;—the result of the consistent application of the method of observation and analysis, the principle of which is that, as nothing can be more than its parts, the only secure path of knowledge is the resolution of things into their ultimate and indivisible elements. But if this flag had conducted to victory in the physical sciences, why might it not equally lead to victory in other fields? It was under the inspiration of this idea that, alike in France and England, philosophy, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, set forward on an analysis of human life, both individual and social, which seemed to promise a new illumination. Applied to mind, the method meant that, in its ultimate nature, knowledge consists of a succession of states, each of which was analyzable into simple elements or ideas cohering with one another

in virtue of a law of association analogous to the principle of gravitation in the physical world.¹

On the same principle, what we call "will" is resolvable into simpler instincts, impulses, passions, which derive their motive power from combination with one another—that individual or group obtaining predominance which succeeds in amassing the strongest appetitive force. "The will," said Hobbes, who had led the way in this method, "is the last appetite in deliberating."²

It is not difficult to see where such a view leads in ethics and politics. If all human action is merely the resultant of the meeting of self-assertive, self-seeking instincts and passions as a physical force is the resultant of its component elements, then freedom is an empty name. The distinction between duty and self-interest, the right and the expedient, is a vanishing one—conscience is merely a subtle sense of what in the long run, and in view of

¹ See Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature* (1739) I., i., § 4.

² *Leviathan* (1651), ch. vi. But it was in the great French writers, Lamettrie and Holbach, that these ideas received their most brilliant and consistent expression. Lamettrie's *L'Homme Machine* appeared in 1747; Holbach's *Système de la Nature* in 1770.

our individual weakness, pays. We respect our neighbour only because we are nervous about ourselves. Conscience, we are told, makes cowards of us all, but before it can make cowards of us it must itself be made, and it is the coward in us that makes it.

While applied to ethics this mode of thought spells naturalism, applied to politics it spells individualism. Society can be nothing more than the aggregate of individuals who compose it. If it appears to possess an inner coherence of its own, this is only because of the stability with which habit is able to invest a union in the first instance due to the external pressure of fear and self-interest. What is true finally within societies is true of the relations of societies to one another. As water cannot rise above its own level, neither can the State rise above the level of the self-seeking of the individuals who compose it. As there is no law but that which power can enforce within societies, neither can there be any other without.

It was these ideas which in one form or another dominated the thought of philosophers in France and England at the end of the seventeenth and throughout the whole course of the eighteenth century. The unflinching logic with which they were enforced by

Hobbes might lead to various illogical palliations of them, as in the moralism of Locke, or it might tempt to exaggerations of them, as in the immoralism of Mandeville,¹ but in one form or another they constituted the philosophical enlightenment of the whole period.

III.

KANT.²

Against all this the German spirit with a sure instinct was in continual revolt. "Search for the ideal," says Lange,³ "runs through the whole century." Here, as in so much else, Goethe may be said to have been the representative of his age. Speaking of Holbach's *Système de la Nature*, the bible of materialism in France, he said of it: "We could not understand how such a book could be dangerous. It appeared to us so dark, so Cimmerian, so death-like, that we could scarcely find patience to endure its presence."⁴ Nevertheless, as Goethe himself very well

¹ *The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices Public Benefits* (1724).

² Immanuel Kant, born of Scottish ancestry at Königsberg, 1724. Died 1804.

³ *History of Materialism*, vol. ii., p. 143.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

knew, it was dangerous so long as it was unanswered, and German philosophy throughout the century was unremittingly employed in the attempt to answer it. The most famous of these attempts was that founded on Leibniz's *Monadology*. Unfortunately Leibniz took as his starting-point precisely the atomism which had vitiated the whole movement he opposed. After resolving the universe into monads without windows, far less doors of communication with a larger world, Leibniz was unable to bring the parts again into any organic union with one another, and for the solution of the problem of the actual unity of life and experience was fain to have recourse to a Pre-established Harmony, which those who followed him saw was either again to enthrone mechanical law or to substitute for it a continual miracle. It was the enduring merit of Kant to have provided a third alternative to the choice that thus seemed offered to his generation of materialism or irrationalism.

It would be vain to hope that in a sketch like the present an adequate idea could be given of so elaborate and, it must be confessed at points, so ambiguous a system as that of the *Critical Philosophy*. But in contrast to the popular philosophy of the time, its main

principle may be made clear before turning to the points in it which specially concern us here.¹

As all theories may be said to be materialistic in spirit which start from the assumption that the parts are prior to the whole, so all may be said to be idealistic which start from the assumption that the whole is prior to the parts; not in the sense that you can have any whole without the parts, but in the sense that you can have no whole, which is merely a mechanical aggregate of independently given units. Idealism, therefore, maintains that so far from being able to understand any concrete thing in experience by an inspection of the parts taken separately, we can only understand the parts in relation to the whole which endows them with their particular form of individuality. The truth of this axiom may be brought home to anyone who is willing to make the attempt to realize in the concrete what a thing is in itself. "Everything," said an eighteenth-century writer,² "is itself, and not another thing." Yes, we may reply, but a thing is itself, not in virtue of anything it possesses in and for itself in a world by itself, but in virtue of the par-

¹ The reader who resents metaphysical foundations as misapplied *Gründlichkeit* may skip to p. 12.

² Bishop Butler, who ought to have known better.

ticular form it assumes through its reactions on other things. The picture which we should form of it is rather that of a focus of concentrating radii that connect it with other things than of a boundary line that separates it from them. This is true even of the atom, the ultimate privileged individual of the physicist, *a fortiori* of organic things. So far, therefore, from everything being itself and not another thing, everything may be said to point beyond itself and reflect the nature of other things.

From this follows a reversal of the popular method of thought in two respects. From the side of existence we must conceive of a thing as possessing individuality, substance, reality, not in proportion as we approach a point at which it can be taken in stark independence of everything else (this, as we have seen, is impossible), but in proportion as it focusses and again reflects the universe of which it is a part. And, secondly, from the side of knowledge, the emphasis passes from the sense-given quality of things as independent substances to the relations in which they stand to other things as that which is really essential and substantial in them—from the *matter*, we might say, to the *form*, from *sensation* to *conception* or *idea*.

Now it was the impossibility of explaining

the relations of things which carry us beyond the merely given here and now on the basis of an analysis which resolves experience into mere momentary sensations and their mechanical union that attracted Kant's attention. It led him to the discovery that, apart from a unifying act of the mind bringing connection and reference to a whole, at once of knowledge and reality, into the otherwise chaotic flux of sensations, there could be no experience of any kind. This was what he called the Copernican revolution in philosophy. It amounted to saying that, instead of starting like the geocentric astronomers with the immediately momentary and given as central, we have to project ourselves to the point of view of the universal system of knowledge, in relation to which alone the immediately given particular can be understood. Unfortunately, Kant failed to emancipate himself wholly from the presuppositions of the philosophy he undermined. In particular, he assumed with it the absolute-ness of the distinction between knowledge and reality. Seeing, then, that knowledge was essentially of relations, he too readily assumed that these relations must somehow be the creation of our own minds, beyond which there lay a relationless, and to us impenetrable, thing

in itself. With this doubt as to the reality of relations went the doubt as to the ultimate validity of the idea of the whole as applied to the real world, and therewith as to the solidity of the whole idealistic fabric. To remove this source of ambiguity, and place the main idea on a securer foundation, was the work of his immediate successors.

Meantime we are concerned with the ethical side of Kant's teaching. Here, by a happy inconsistency, he resolutely refused to allow himself to be disturbed by any doubt as to the reality of the moral order as a whole.

He held that, just as reason raises us in knowledge through the idea of an ordered, self-consistent experience above the chaos of mere sense impressions, so in practice, by pointing imperatively to the ideal of a self-consistent system of conduct, it raises us above the distraction and chaos of the natural instincts and appetites. It is the habit of subordinating impulse and desire to this "categorical imperative"—the habitual identification of the self with this ideal order—that Kant¹ meant by the "good will," than which "we can conceive

¹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, § 1 (Kant's *Theory of Ethics*, Abbott, p. 9).

of no other thing in the world, or even out of it, that can be called absolutely and unconditionally good," and therefore an end in itself. The same "reason" which imposes upon each the duty of raising himself above the caprices and inconsistencies of the natural appetites and passions to the unity of a self or person gives him also entry into a society of like selves—a "Kingdom of Ends," as Kant called it. It is in connection with this kingdom that he formulated what he held to be the supreme maxim of all social and political action superseding all naturalistic or merely utilitarian rules. "So act as to treat humanity, whether in thy own person or in the person of another, always as an end, and never as a means only."¹

These ideas are sometimes spoken of as transcendental, as though they were without solid basis in experience. In reality, as William Wallace has shown,² they were suggested to Kant by a profound reading of history as a continuous effort to substitute the rule of law for the rule of cunning and violence. Looked at from the point of view of the end (and only thus can it be rightly judged), the course of history shows a progressive approach to an order of society not only formally free in the

¹ Abbott, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

² Kant, ch. xiv.

sense of being autonomous, but really free in the sense of embodying in its institutions the principle that the end of each is the end of all. It is for this principle that the modern State in its highest development stands. *Might* the State must have, but it is only the might of the *State* when it is used in the service of law and freedom.

But Kant did not stop here. He held that the principle which had already established itself here and there (he lived to share the hopes of the French Revolution) in particular States was bound to operate more and more in the relations of States with one another. It was in this way that there dawned upon Kant, not as in the Middle Ages as a theological dogma or as a legal speculation, nor as with some moderns as a poetic dream, but as a consequence of a mature philosophical conviction, the possibility of a peaceful federation of States which should replace the present transitional phase of armed violence tempered by partial and precarious treaties.

It was this idea that he worked out in his old age in the short essay on *Eternal Peace*.¹ He there sets out in the form of preliminary and definitive articles the conditions, negative and positive, of such a peace. Everything is

¹ Published 1795 (Eng. Tr., Allen and Unwin).

to be avoided that would make the state of nature permanent: "No treaty of peace can be a real one which is made with the secret reservation of material for a future war." No independent State (great and small are here the same) shall be acquired by another by inheritance, exchange, purchase, or gift. Standing armies shall in time cease. No public debt shall be contracted for purposes of external action. No State shall forcibly interfere with the constitution or government of another State. No State at war with another State shall commit such hostile acts as must make mutual trust impossible in a future state of peace. He denounces assassination, poisoning, breaches of capitulation, attempts to make use of treachery among the enemy, and adds a warning against "punitive wars" between States as inconsistent with the idea of political right. All these things are the destruction of trust between nations. If practised and persisted in they can only end in a war of extermination and "the kind of eternal peace that would be found in the great graveyard of the human race."

Of the positive conditions, the first is that the civil constitution of each State shall be republican. Kant was profoundly influenced

by the ideas of the French Revolution, but he was under no delusion as to the efficacy of forms. A republic meant with him what it ought to mean—a State in which the idea of the common good permeated all public action. The form mattered little, and Kant was well satisfied with a monarchy in which the King claimed to be only “the first servant of the State.” What he was convinced of was that only when the people who suffered from war had secured a decisive voice in the question would the first real step be taken towards lasting peace. What was wanted was a lead—a crystallizing point for the new order: “When fortune so wills it that a mighty and enlightened people is able to form itself into a republic (which by its very nature must be inclined to eternal peace), it makes a centre for the federative union of other States to which they can attach themselves, and in this way secures the freedom of States in accordance with the idea of the Law of Nations and the gradual extension of the federative union by further alliances of the same kind.” In such a federation the right to citizenship of the world shall be conferred on each so far as to give him the freedom to visit and trade in other countries than his own. “The fact,”

says Kant, "that the sense of community among the peoples of the earth has gone so far that the violation of right in one place is felt everywhere, has made the idea of a citizenship of the world no phantastic dream, but a necessary extension of the unwritten code of States and Peoples."

Finally, the essential principle on which we are to go in all politics is that the practicable is to be measured by the right, and not the right by the practicable. We must gradually learn to say in politics as in morals, "I ought, therefore I can." Perhaps the opposition is not so deep as appears, and "a deeper study of nature will show ground for believing that the antithesis of the practical to the right is a superficial appearance, and that a design may be traced in the mechanical course of nature itself out of the very discord of men, even against their wills, to elicit concord."¹

It was this reading of nature that prepared Kant to recognize in war itself "a deep-hidden and designed enterprise of supreme wisdom for preparing, if not for establishing, conformity to law amid the freedom of States, and with this a unity of a morally grounded system of

¹ See the excellent summary of Kant's political teaching in E. Caird's *Critical Philosophy of Kant*, ii. 350.

those States." In the same spirit he was ready to recognize the purifying and exalting effect of war on the life of the individual nation. Yet he was under no delusion as to its true nature. War was the outcome of the bad principle in human nature, and however we might be tempted to find compensation for it in the evil which it uproots and in its superiority to the deadness of a universal monarchy, "yet," as an ancient observed, "it makes more bad men than it takes away."¹

I have spoken of the obscurity of Kant's teaching. In many parts it remains rather a hint of a new world of thought still immersed in the old, reminding one of Michael Angelo's statue of The Dawn in the Medici Mausoleum just emerging from the marble rock. But where his whole feeling is engaged in his subject, as in these passages, his thought stands out clear and distinct. Still more is this the case when, in the work just quoted, these ethical and political ideas take the form of religion. "We may reasonably say that the Kingdom of God is come as soon as ever the principle has taken root generally and in the public mind that the creeds of the Churches all point to a moral—in other words, a Divine

¹ See *Critique of Judgment*, Appendix, § 83, and *Philosophical Theory of Religion*, I., iii.

community upon earth. For this principle, because it contains the motive force of a continual approach to perfection, is like a seed that grows up and scatters other seed such as itself; and it bears within it invisibly the whole fabric which will one day illuminate and rule the world. Truth and goodness have their basis in the natural disposition of every human being, both in his reason and in his heart. And because of this affinity with the moral nature of rational beings, truth and goodness will not fail to spread in every direction. Hindrances arising from political and social causes, which may from time to time interfere with this expansion, serve rather to draw closer the union of hearts in the good. For the good, when once it has been clearly perceived, never abandons the mind. This then, though invisible to the human eye, is the constantly progressive operation of the good principle. It works towards erecting in the human race, as a community under moral laws, a power and a kingdom which shall maintain the victory over evil and secure to the world under its dominion an eternal peace.”¹

¹ *Religion within the Limits of Pure Reason*, Part III., p. 220 (Hartenstein). The passage is quoted by B. Bosanquet (*Essays and Addresses*, p. 129), who adds: “We may be glad that these words now appear to us

IV.

KANT AND THE PRUSSIAN STATE.

There can be no doubt that Kant exercised a profound influence, not only on literature through Goethe and Schiller, but on contemporary politics. Some of the leading Ministers of the time were devoted students of the Königsberg philosophy. It is related of Zedlitz, the Minister of Justice at Berlin, that he contrived on one occasion to follow a course of Kant's lectures five hundred miles away by the aid of a shorthand report. It was he, too, who was the hero of the celebrated Miller-Arnold case, withstanding Frederick's high-handed justice in the name of the letter of the law—when Greek met Greek.¹

Of any direct influence of Kant's philosophy on Frederick the Great himself there is little trace. Heine has even been pleased to speak of the great King as "Crowned Materialism"; and, with the conquest of Silesia in mind, we

(as they did to the Prussian Government of the time) no dangerous speculation, but the utterance of the most sober common sense; for it is none the less true that they contain the essence of European civilization—a hard-won inheritance which it is our duty, in the words of the Athenian's oath, to leave to others 'not less but greater and nobler than it is now intrusted to us.' "

¹ See Carlyle's *Frederick the Great*, x. 142 *et seq.*

should have some difficulty, in spite of Carlyle's admiration, in accepting him as a Knight of the Holy Grail. Yet he was the outcome of the same spirit of seriousness that produced the Kantian idealism, and he was in his own way engaged in "the quest for the ideal." Whatever we say of his foreign policy, the spirit of his administration in Prussia was the spirit of Kant. He was not the War Lord, but the First Servant of the State, who boasted that, in a population of 5,200,000, only fourteen or fifteen were annually condemned to death. It is for this reason that Seeley is able to say that "the Categorical Imperative of Kant was appropriately first named and described in the age and country of Frederick the Great."¹ Of Frederick himself in his old age the saying is reported, "Did the whole Gospel contain only this precept, 'What ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them,' it must be owned that these few words contain the summary of all morality."² If this was the sincere conviction of his life, he was not far from Kant's Kingdom of Ends; and it is not too much to say that it was the ideas of Kant, and not those of the materialism they superseded, that presided at the birth of the modern Prussian State.

¹ *Life of Stein*, i. 44.

² W. Wallace's *Kant*, p. 152.

LECTURE II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF IDEALISM

"No writer in Germany, be he acquainted or not with the Critical Philosophy, but breathes a spirit of devoutness and elevation more or less directly drawn from it."—CARLYLE (1827).

I.

FICHTE.¹

HAD Carlyle chosen to write on the Hero as Philosopher, he would undoubtedly have chosen the philosopher who had so decisive an influence in the development of his own thought. Probably to the present day Fichte's leading ideas are best known in this country from what Carlyle says of him in the *Essay on the State of German Literature* and from *Sartor Resartus*. We have seen how the conception of a moral purpose or Idea working in the ages came more and more to dominate Kant's teaching.

¹ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, born at Rammenau, in Upper Lusatia, 1762. Died 1814.

It was this that was seized upon by Fichte and made the centre of his philosophy. Of this Idea the whole material universe must be taken as the sign and symbol. All history is the conscious or unconscious effort to seize and embody it in human life. The particular interpretation by which he set his own mark on the history of his country was called forth by the circumstances of the new time.

As Kant's ideas may be said to have presided over the birth of modern Prussia in the time of Frederick, Fichte's may be said to have presided over its rebirth after the humiliation inflicted on her by Napoleon. In the disastrous years, 1806 and 1807, catastrophe followed catastrophe, ending in the Treaty of Tilsit, whereby Prussian territory was reduced from a population of nearly 10,000,000 to less than 5,000,000, the army fixed for ten years at 42,000 men, and an indemnity imposed great enough to afford Napoleon the opportunity of retaining hold upon the country as a remorseless creditor. It was in these circumstances that Fichte came forward in December, 1807, and in his famous *Addresses to the German Nation* brought a new spirit to politics. The addresses contain two notes. They are a summons to the spirit of nationality. "Nation and country,"

he announces, "extend far beyond the State." For ordinary times the spirit of civic well-being is sufficient, but when times are disturbed and unprecedented issues are raised, "What," is his first question, "is the spirit that can be put at the helm that can decide with proper firmness and sureness, and without uneasy hesitation,—that can have an unquestioned right to demand of everyone it meets whether he himself consents or not, and if necessary to compel him, to put everything, life included, to hazard? Not," he answers, "the spirit of quiet civic loyalty to the constitution and the laws; no, but the consuming flame of the higher patriotism which conceives the nation as the embodiment of the eternal; for which the high-minded man devotes himself with joy, the low-minded man, who only exists for the sake of the other, must be made to devote himself."

How is this spirit to be created? This is his second question. The hands of the nation were tied. Neither in government, in legislation, nor in the army, was there any opportunity for a constructive policy. Only in one direction was there hope. "Education alone has been overlooked. If we want an occupation, let us take to this. There we may expect to

be left undisturbed." So little faith is there, he explains, in this spiritual weapon that the Press will devote itself to making fun of a nation that hopes for so much from so little. "I hope—perhaps I deceive myself, but as it is only for this hope I care to live I cannot part with it—I hope to convince some Germans, and bring them to see that nothing but education can rescue us from all the miseries that overwhelm us."

These two notes he unites in the peroration : "All ages, all the wise and good who have ever breathed on this earth, all their thoughts and aspirations after a Highest, mingle in these voices and surround you, and raise supplicating hands to you. Even Providence, if one may say so, and the Divine plan of the world in the creation of a race of man, which indeed only exists that it may be taken into men's thoughts and brought to reality by them, pleads with you to save its honour and its very being. If there is any truth in what I have said in these addresses it is you (the original stem of modern Europe) amongst all modern peoples to whom the germ of human perfection in a special sense is entrusted and on whom the lead in its development has been conferred. If ye fail in this your special call, with you fails also all hope

of the whole human race for salvation from the depths of its evil fortunes. There is no way of escape ; if ye sink, all humanity sinks with you without hope of future restoration.”¹ So, too, when after the retreat from Moscow the time came to sound the tocsin, Fichte was again to the front with the same appeal to the nation in his *Lectures on the Idea of a Just War*.

But it was not only in summoning the creative spirit in politics from its long slumber in the German people that Fichte stamped himself in his time. The actual course of the new constructions was largely fashioned by men who were steeped in Kantian and Fichtean ideas. Stein himself, it is true, in spite of his debt to Fichte, suspected what he called metapolitics, but his friend and right-hand man von Schön was a devout student of idealistic metaphysics. He used to say that “Without Kant and *Sauerkraut* he would long ago have been in his grave,” and of the younger philosopher he wrote : “It was by my intercourse with Fichte at Königsberg that the view up-

¹ Fourteenth address *fin.* In these references I have availed myself of Seeley’s account of Fichte’s share in the resuscitation of Germany (*Life of Stein*, ii. 29 *et seq.*), where the addresses are described as “the prophetic or canonical book which announces and explains the great transition in modern Europe.”

wards was first opened to me, and his society laid in me such a firm foundation in this respect, that the tendency in everything to seek and hold the higher point of view runs, I am sure, through my whole life."¹ Nor can there be any doubt that not only was the way prepared for the educational programme of the great Minister von Humboldt by Fichte's addresses, but that the inspiring idea came from the same source.² It was this debt of the new Prussian State to the idealist philosophy that was commemorated in the inscription on the obelisk erected in his honour before the Oranienburg Gate in Berlin: "The teachers shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars that shine for ever and ever."

II.

HEGEL.³

It was in Hegel that the idealistic philosophy reached its fullest development and its most decisive political influence. Seeley remarks somewhere that there is something of the University professor about the Prussian State

¹ Seeley, *op. cit.*, i. 379.

² *Op. cit.*, ii. 428.

³ George William Frederic Hegel, born at Stuttgart, the capital of Würtemberg, 1770. Died 1831.

official. It is equally true that there is something of the State official about the Prussian professor.¹ When, therefore, Hegel was appointed to Fichte's chair in the new University of Berlin, that "conservatoire of the German soul"—in 1818, it appeared as the official endorsement of the philosophy of which he was accepted as the leading exponent. In return, "his main influence," says his biographer,² "on the Berliners was that he formally put them to school, and with naïve inflexibility made them learn his system." That he succeeded in this arduous enterprise, and for half a generation, until his death, dominated the thought of his time, shows that there was something in his teaching which appealed to the deeper instincts and corresponded to the ideal strivings of the nation.

Any attempt to characterize this philosophy as a whole in contrast to that of his predecessors would here be out of place. But I hope, in view of current misstatements as to the spirit of his teaching, that English Hegelians will forgive me for mentioning, shortly and roughly, two points on which he

¹ "Professors in Germany," says the witty author of *The German Enigma*, "officiate rather than profess."

² See Caird's *Hegel*, p. 90.

represents a development on Kant. In the first place he sweeps away all the hesitations and ambiguities in the Kantian theory of knowledge. He will have nothing to say to the attempt to create a gulf between things as known to us and things in themselves. In all knowledge we are in touch with reality. Idealism is as far as possible removed from contempt for the real and actual. "Our America is here or nowhere." The true distinction is between the incoherent and the coherent, the partial and the complete. This is the meaning of the frequently quoted and almost as frequently misunderstood saying that "the real is the rational." Not everything that is actual is its own justification, but what is justified in it is that which is of a piece with the order of the world. In the second place he frees the principles by which unity and coherence are introduced into knowledge—Kant's "categories"—from the formal scheme in which Kant had imprisoned them. The ideas which guide the sciences: mathematical ideas of space and number, physical ideas of substance, causality, force, and interaction, biological ideas of life and function, psychological ideas of mind and purpose, all stand for different levels of insight into the con-

crete facts of our world. Hegel's account of them in his *Logic* is not, as it has been called, "a dance of bloodless categories," but a profound reading at once of the inner structure of experience and of the course of intellectual development.

It was this spirit at once of faith in the reality of ideas and of determination to follow the course of their development in the actual world that he brought with him to the task of interpreting the political world of which he found himself in the centre when he came to Berlin.

To this period belong two of his chief works, the *Philosophy of Law*, in which he expounds the nature of the State, and the *Philosophy of History*, in which he points to the rôle which the course of historical development seemed to indicate as the destiny of the German nation.

Hegel's analysis of the social structure in the first ranks with that of Aristotle's *Politics* as one of the great achievements of practical philosophy. It centres in his theory of the State, the whole or substantial unity in which all other forms of social organization—natural, legal, economic, educational—find their completion. Hegel agreed with Aristotle that the State comes before the individual and the family, in the sense that it is only in and

through the State that they can reach their fullest development. On the other hand, he strikes the modern note in defining the State in terms of freedom and spirit. The State is a spiritual structure, "the world which the spirit has made for itself,"¹ the highest embodiment of conscious reason, "freedom in being." It is sometimes thought that the State has weakened in modern times to make room for the freedom of the individual, and is bound to decay. Not so, says Hegel. "The modern State has enormous strength and depth."² It is just this that enables it to do full justice to individual and sectional interests. What we call the civil or political disposition—in other words, patriotism (Hegel will not separate them as Fichte does)—is just the confident consciousness "that my particular interest is contained and preserved in the interest and end of the State."³ The true State, in fact, is not something different from *me*, and just in this consciousness I am free. If all this is ordinarily hid from us, it is only because "custom makes invisible that upon which our whole existence turns."⁴

The problem of the relation of the State to

¹ *Philosophy of Right*, Eng. Tr., § 272, addition.

² *Op. cit.*, § 260. ³ *Op. cit.*, § 268. ⁴ *Ibid.*

the Church, of politics to religion, finds its solution in the same principle. The idea has grown up that the Church represents the Kingdom of God, or, at least, the way to it—the forecourt of it—while the State is the kingdom of this world, the sphere of the transient and the finite. The Church is an end in itself, the State is a mere means. With such a distinction Hegel will have nothing to do. The State, like the Church, has a vital soul, and is the vitalizing power of all that is highest in us. It thus reaches beyond all limits, and in this sense is infinite, as the Church itself. “A bad State is, indeed, purely finite and worldly, but the rational State is itself infinite.” With a reference probably to Hobbes’s phrase, Hegel is prepared to describe its ordinances, as Kepler described the laws of the planets, as the “footsteps of God upon earth.”¹

As to the form of government, Hegel was convinced that sovereignty must centre in an individual; only thus can the independent existence and the true organic unity of the State find expression. “When a people is not a patriarchal tribe, having passed from the primitive condition, which made the forms of

¹ *Op. cit.*, § 258, addition.

aristocracy and democracy possible, and is represented, not as in a wilful and unorganized condition, but as a self-developed, truly organic totality,—in such a people sovereignty is the personality of the whole, and exists, too, in a reality which is adequate to the conception—the person of the monarch.”¹

In the second of the works that belong to the Berlin period, Hegel works out in detail Kant's conception of history as the development of freedom. The framework is that of the succession of imperial powers—the Oriental, the Greek and Roman, and the German “worlds.” In the first the one is free, in the second the few, in the third the many are free. We are here concerned with his teaching as to the essential spirit and contribution to civilization of the German world. In it he sees the human spirit set free by Christianity coming to a new and fuller knowledge of its freedom. This was the meaning of the Reformation :

“While the rest of the world are urging their way to India and America—straining every nerve to gain wealth and to acquire a secular dominion which shall encompass the globe, and in which the sun shall never set—we find

¹ *Op. cit.*, § 279, note.

a simple *monk* looking for that specific embodiment of Deity which Christendom had formerly sought in an earthly sepulchre of stone rather than in the deeper abyss of . . . the Spirit and the Heart . . . in faith and spiritual enjoyment. These two words express everything. . . . In the proclamation of these principles is unfurled the new, the latest standard round which the peoples rally—the banner of *Free Spirit*, independent, though finding its life in the truth, and enjoying independence only in it. This is the banner under which we serve and which we bear. Time since that epoch has had no other work to do than the formal imbuing of the world with this principle. Culture is essentially concerned with Form ; the work of Culture is the production of the Form of Universality”¹—the conformity, as he goes on to explain, of Law, Property, Social Morality, Government, Constitutions to general principles, in order that they may accord with the ideas of Free Will and be rational. The monarch who had made this “universality” the conscious and consistent aim of his administration was Frederick the Great, who is thus in a special

¹ Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, Eng. Tr., J. Sibree, p. 431 *et seq.*

sense the representative of the Reformation Movement, "the essence of which is that Man is in his very nature destined to be free."¹

It is on the ground of his exaltation of the State and his manifest leaning to the Prussian form of monarchy that Hegel has been accused of being the philosopher of the Prussian military tradition.² It is quite true that the State is apt to fill in Hegel the place in the horizon that the Republic of Nations held in Kant's view. Hegel had lived through the enthusiasm of the French Revolution, and, like Burke, had come to realize the element of individualism and anarchy which it contained. He felt that the time had come to vindicate the reality of the State as the "substance" of individual, family and national life. He was further convinced that justice could only be done to the unity of the State by a personal head as in modern constitutional monarchy. In all this he put the Prussians to school, but there is no ground to ally his political teaching with militarism as we are learning to know it

¹ Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, Eng. Tr., J. Sibree, p. 434.

² See Mr. Barker's Oxford pamphlet on *Nietzsche and Treitschke*, p. 4, and Dr. Michael Sadler's *Modern Germany and the Modern World*, p. 10.

to-day. The keynote of militarism is the doctrine that the State rests upon force. But this is precisely the view against which Hegel contends in the *Philosophy of Right*. "The binding cord," he writes, "is not force, but the deep-seated feeling of order that is possessed by us all." He has no words strong enough to denounce von Haller—the von Treitschke of his time, who had written: "It is the eternal unchangeable decree of God that the most powerful must rule, and will for ever rule," and who had poured contempt on the national liberties of Germany and our own Magna Charta and the Bill of Rights as mere "documentary liberties." In all this Hegel says Haller has confused the force of right with the right of force. "The power he means is not the power of the right, but the power of the vulture to tear in pieces the innocent lamb."¹

As force is not the foundation, neither is war the end of the State. "War," said Clausewitz, a contemporary military writer, "is the continuation of politics." No, Hegel would have answered, it is the failure of politics. The continuation of politics is art, science, religion—all that goes to make what Aristotle called the good

¹ *Philosophy of Right*, p. 245 n.

life—for the full development of which the State is the essential condition. That he should have had comparatively little to say on international law, which can hardly be said to have existed in his time, is comprehensible in a writer with so profound a respect for actuality. Yet he says sufficient to show that he would not have tolerated the doctrine that the State is the ultimate appeal in matters of right. Above and beyond the State there is the spirit of the world, which is also the spirit of God, before which all things are judged: "The history of the world is the judgment of the world."¹ It was he who said of Napoleon that he "had brought the highest genius to victory, only to show how little victory alone could achieve"—against the moral forces of the world. It is true that his theory of politics found approval in the highest political circles, but before his death they had come to suspect that there was "perilous stuff" in it for all reactionary and repressive policy.²

But the decisive proof of the spirit of Hegel's teaching is his own description of the kind of empire to which he sought to direct the hopes

¹ The saying is usually attributed to Schiller, but see *op. cit.*, § 340.

² See E. Caird's *Hegel*, p. 94.

of his own age. In his first public utterance as University Professor in Heidelberg, in 1816, he used these words: "Now that the German nation has redeemed itself by the sword from the worst of tyrannies, and regained its nationality—the foundation of all higher life—we may hope that besides the kingdom of this world, on which all thoughts and efforts have been hitherto concentrated, the kingdom of God may also be thought of; in other words, that besides political and other worldly interests, science and philosophy, the free interests of intelligence, may also rise to newness of life. History shows us that even when all but the name of philosophy was lost in other lands, it has maintained itself as the peculiar possession of the German nation. We have received from Nature the high calling to be guardians of this sacred fire. Let us together greet the dawn of a better time, when the spirit that has hitherto been driven out of itself may return to itself again and win room and space wherein to found a kingdom of its own."¹ Had he been able to look forward half a century after his death, in 1831, and to see the ruin about to fall on the spiritual empire he and his great predecessors

¹ Quoted, *ibid.*, p. 78.

had been building : had he seen the establishment in high places of the doctrines they had spent their lives in combating—he would have been filled with amazement and terror.

It is not in Hegelianism, but in the violent reaction against the whole Idealist philosophy that set in shortly after his death, that we have to look for the philosophical foundations of present-day militarism.

LECTURE III

REACTION AND DENIAL

“ We are reaching manhood later than other nations, but we have also experienced a more beautiful, richer, if almost too enthusiastic a youth ; and it remains to be proved whether our people has been enervated by these intellectual delights, or whether in its ideal past it possesses an inexhaustible source of force and freshness that needs only to be diverted into the channels of a new productiveness to achieve great results.”—LANGE : *History of Materialism* (1866).

THAT a point of view so solidly founded in the very nature of experience and so illuminating should have been suddenly and entirely lost in a nation's philosophy is, of course, inconceivable. The loss was, in the first instance, gradual ; nor would it be true to say that throughout the period with which we are concerned idealism, as I have described it, was ever without witnesses. Two names stand out among those who were more than followers and expositors of Hegel, Hermann Lotze

(1817-1881), and Wilhelm Wundt (b. 1832). But Lotze's influence on his generation was checked and diverted into other lines by the obscurity in which he left the relation, on the one hand, of his souls or monads to the unity of the Whole, and, on the other, of mechanism to life and purpose;¹ while Wundt's more pronounced idealism has been overshadowed by his world-wide reputation as a psychologist. It remains true that the outstanding fact in German philosophy as a national influence was the violent reaction against the whole mode of thought represented by the line of thought sketched in the preceding lecture. The story of this reaction itself is a complicated one. I can only select one or two of the chief threads in it as they concern our subject.

I.

PESSIMISM.

I have spoken of the reaction as setting in after Hegel's death in 1831, but already in his own lifetime and from within the circle of Kantian idealism the revolt had begun. If

¹ On Lotze's influence on materialism, see Lange, *op. cit.*, ii. 287.

ever philosopher disbelieved in "matter" it was Schopenhauer.¹ But instead of seeking for the clue to the ultimate nature of our world with Kant in thought and reason, he sought for it in will. This would not of itself have severed him from the idealism of Fichte and Hegel, to whom thought and will are different sides of the same fundamental principle of idea or intelligence. But by will, Schopenhauer meant the blind impulse or nisus of which all Nature, from the attractions and repulsions of matter up to desire and will in man, is the manifestation; and it was an essential part of this conception that the idea or phenomenal manifestation is wholly incommensurable with that which manifests itself. "All idea, of whatever kind it is, all *object*, is *phenomenal* existence, but the *will* alone is a *thing in itself*. As such it is throughout not idea, but *toto genere* different from it."²

We have been recently made familiar with a similar doctrine in Bergson's *élan vital*.

¹ Arthur Schopenhauer was born at Dantzic in 1788 from parents of Dutch extraction. He died in 1860. His chief work, *The World as Will and Idea*, was published in 1818.

² *The World as Will and Idea*, § 21, Eng. Tr., i. 142.

The difference is that, while Bergson seeks to establish therewith the reality of time and its achievements, according to Schopenhauer the stream of time carries everything away. All Nature is thrown forward on the future by the pain and the restlessness of desire ; but no sooner has the will to live found itself in possession of its object than it loses all satisfaction in it, and sinks into the ennui of satiety. Instead of an ordered progress towards fuller realization of its potentialities, all life is an aimless tossing from pain to pain. Life is a continual dying, but we live to die instead of dying to live.

Like more superficial pessimists, Schopenhauer had little difficulty in finding support for his philosophy in the facts of the life about him. The pain and stress of its workdays, the ennui of its Sundays, reproduced in its vision of Heaven and Hell—

“ Heaven but the vision of fulfilled desire,
And Hell the shadow from a soul on fire,”

its restless travel and its play (“ the expression of the miserable side of life ”), were favourite illustrations.¹ Besides death, there is only one harbour of refuge—the moments when, in pure

¹ *Op. cit.*, § 58.

contemplation of beauty, we escape from the will to live. Schopenhauer is at his best in what he says of the meaning of beauty—the sunbeam that pierces the storm, the rainbow that rests on the ceaseless downpour of the waterfall. If we follow him here, we may pass, as William Wallace asks us to do, from the paradoxical, withal egoistical, pessimist, “sinking as the years pass into a solitary cave, whence, like the giant in Bunyan, he rages impotently at the heterodox wayfarer,” to the picture of another soul—“Which, freed from the bonds of temporal quarrels, draws close to the great heart of life and tries to see clearly what man’s existence and hopes and destiny really are; which recognizes the peaceful creations of Art as the most adequate representation the sense-world can give of the true inward being of all things, and which holds the best life to be that of one who has pierced through the illusions dividing one conscious individuality from another into that heart of eternal rest where we are each members one of another.”¹ But it is one of the misfortunes of these lectures that they have henceforth to do with the seamy side of philosophy, and, like war itself, have to concentrate attention

¹ W. Wallace’s *Life of Schopenhauer*, p. 112.

rather on the way that things are taken than on what was really meant.¹

Even so there seems little connection between a philosophy which finds its ideal in the death of the will to live, and one that exalts it in its most dangerous form to the highest principle of action. It seems more allied, as indeed it was in the mind of Schopenhauer, to the passivity and asceticism of the Eastern Jogi than to the violence and self-assertion of Western naturalism. But it is just here that we have to note the difference. Pessimism is one thing in the East, where it is a cover for the religious mysticism of a few holy men ; it is quite another thing in the West, where it is a standing challenge to a civilization founded on the principle of the essential value of human life, and the institutions by the aid of which it is developed.

Schopenhauer was ready to admit that society in all its forms of the family, industry, civic life, is the outcome of the will to live. But with him it is a will that is the source of all delusion. These forms, therefore, instead of possessing any substantive value, stand for

¹ "Quiquid recipitur, recipitur secundum modum recipientis" is a principle we have constantly to bear in mind in dealing with the whole subject.

various degrees of falsity. We can understand in particular how his wrath burned against the State as the very type of the organization of Mâyâ, and against the democratic movement, which meant the penetration of the nation with its subtle poison.

But there was another and more fatal connection between pessimism and the spirit of revolt against the spirit of Western Christendom. The doctrine, properly interpreted, lifted a warning voice against accepting the mere blind impulse of self-assertion as a principle of action, demanding rather its complete suppression. But doctrines like that of the will to live are apt, as we have seen, to find entrance in their generation *secundum modum recipientis*, and the negative side of pessimism was not likely to commend itself to the robust spirit of a nation just awaking to a sense of its power. Let this side of it be dropped, and you have something that bore a fatal resemblance to the naked assertion of the right of self-affirmation in the line that instinct or interest prompts. Schopenhauer himself seems to have been aware of the ambiguity of his teaching, and in at least one interesting passage to have hinted at this as another, if an inferior, alternative to the complete denial of the will. "A man," he

writes,¹ "who had thoroughly assimilated the truths we have already advanced, but had not come to know, either from his own experience or from a deeper insight, that constant suffering is essential to life, who found satisfaction and all that he wished in life . . . such a man would stand with 'firm-knit bones on the well-rounded, enduring earth,' and would have nothing to fear. Armed with the knowledge we have given him, he would await with indifference the death that hastens towards him on the wings of time. He would regard it as a false illusion, an impotent spectre which frightens the weak, but has no power over him who knows that he is himself the will of which the whole world is the objectification or copy, and that therefore he is always certain of life and also of the present, the peculiar and only form of the phenomenon of the will. He would not be terrified by an endless past or future in which he would not be, for this he would regard as the empty delusion of the web of *Mâyâ*. Thus he would no more fear death than the sun fears the night. In the *Bhagava Gîta*, Krishna thus raises the mind of his young pupil Arjuna when, seized with compunction at the sight of the arrayed

¹ *The World as Will and Idea*, § 54, I., 360.

hosts (somewhat as Xerxes was), he loses heart, and desires to give up the battle in order to avert the death of so many thousands. Krishna leads him to this point of view, and the death of all those thousands can no longer restrain him : he gives the sign for battle." He ends the passage by quoting the verses from Goethe's *Prometheus* :

" Here sit I, form mankind
In my own image,
A race like to myself.
To suffer and to weep,
Rejoice, enjoy
And heed thee not
As I."

The World as Will and Idea was first published in 1818, but it was not till after the publication of the second edition in 1844 that, through the breaches which scientific materialism and revolutionary democracy had made in the bulwarks of the older creeds,¹ his ideas began to find their way into the public mind. In 1856 he was surprised to find his philosophy acclaimed by officers in the barracks of Magdeburg, Ruppın, Spandau, and Königsberg, and throughout Prussia generally. Perhaps this is not surprising ; nor that by 1877, as Wundt tells us, his philosophy, as interpreted

¹ See Wallace, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

by von Hartmann, "was more popular in Germany than any other had ever been."¹ His decisive influence on Nietzsche belongs to the later part of this story. I may end this section by quoting Nietzsche himself in support of its main contention. In one of his moments of deepest insight, which were usually his moments of most glaring inconsistency, Nietzsche says of Schopenhauer that, "by his unintelligent rage against Hegel, he succeeded in severing the whole of the last generation from its connection with German culture."²

II.

THE NEW MATERIALISM.

That the reaction that set in after 1831 was due in part to a certain high-handedness of method and obscurity in the results of the Hegelian philosophy cannot, I think, be denied, but the main causes are to be sought elsewhere. The difficulty in tracing them is increased by the fact already alluded to—that the course of development in this country throughout the century has on the whole been in the oppo-

¹ Article in *Mind*, 1877.

² *Beyond Good and Evil*, § 204.

site direction. Beginning with a philosophy materialist in principle and individualistic in profession, Anglo-Saxon thought has moved steadily towards one that is idealistic in theory, and social, if not socialistic, in practice. One is sometimes inclined to apply the axiom of "wild oats" to nations as to individuals, to theory as well as to practice. Modern Germany may be said to have had a sober youth. She has been blamed for culpable absent-mindedness and absorption in mystic speculation, while other nations were stealing a march upon her in exploiting the habitable world. I believe that never was she truer to herself. By a profound instinct she felt that no advance in civilization could be solid which rested in the wood, hay, and stubble of uncriticized dogma. She applied to the life of the world what Socrates said of the individual, "The uncriticized life is no life at all." But the consequence was that, when the reaction came, it was all the more sudden and violent.

Already in the thirties it was clear that a new era had dawned. Chambers of commerce, technical institutes, commercial schools, chemical laboratories, sprang up like mushrooms. "Now for the first time was it possible in Germany for a merchant and a promoter of

limited companies like Hausemann to become the leader of public opinion."¹ In the later forties came a period of unparalleled economic development. "Prussia plunged desperately into mining and smelting. Coal and iron became the watchword of the age."² With the needs of industry went the need of concentrating the intellectual resources of the nation in the physical sciences. This is what had already taken place in other countries. What was peculiar to Germany was that the old habit of metaphysical construction reasserted itself in the changed circumstances, and "chemists and physiologists seized the trowel which the metaphysicians had dropped."³ The result was that, going along with the material expansion and the devotion to the special sciences it evoked, we have a philosophy which sought to invert the old order, and to read body and matter where it had read mind and spirit. "The old philosophy," said Feuerbach,⁴ who first raised the standard of revolt, "started from the principle: I am a thinking being; the body is no part of my being. The new

¹ Lange, *History of Materialism*, ii. 258 (Eng. Tr.).

² *Ibid.*, p. 262.

³ Lange, *loc. cit.*

⁴ Ludwig Feuerbach, born at Anspach, 1804. Died 1872.

philosophy, on the other hand, begins with the principle : I am a real and sensible being ; the body is part of my being—nay, the body in its totality is my *ego*, is itself my essence. The old philosophy was at constant war with the senses, the new philosophy is in harmony and at peace with them.”¹ This seems unambiguous enough, but it was not in vain that Feuerbach had sat at Hegel’s feet. In him materialism speaks with a double voice. Its hands, we might say, are as the hands of Esau, but its voice is as the voice of Jacob. As he proceeds, Feuerbach is fain to treat of the body and the senses as merely the inlet of the spirit. “We catch with the ears, not only the rushing of the water and the rustling of the leaves, but also the earnest voice of love and wisdom ; we see not only mirror surfaces and coloured figures, but we look into the glance of a man.”² The emphasis passes from matter to man, from the separate bodily *ego* revealed to the senses to the invisible *ego*, that is one with the other. “The individual man does not contain the nature of man in himself either as a moral or a thinking being. The nature of man is contained only in the community.”³ “My first

¹ *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft* (1843), § 36.

² *Op. cit.*, § 40, 42.

³ *Op. cit.*, § 59.

thought was God, my second was Reason, my third was Man." For it is man that "is God to man"; the "unity of the I and the Thou is God."¹ It is in this way—by this inconsistency, that he is able to hint at an ethics which has a closer resemblance to idealism than to naturalism. "The first stone against which the pride of egoism stumbles is the Thou, the *alter ego*."² "The history of mankind consists of nothing else than a continuous and progressive conquest of limits." Feuerbach differs from idealism in finding the infinite, which man ever seeks, not in God or the Whole, but in the human species.

It is this thought that is worked out in the *Essence of Christianity*³ (1841), where he appears rather as the German Comte than the German Holbach. In such a philosophy as in Positivism there is clearly no stability. It must either go forward to the denial of any final limit in the physical environment itself, or go back to its own materialistic self-centred starting-point and begin again. But the former alternative would mean a return to the Idealism that had

¹ *Op. cit.*, § 59.

² *Essence of Christianity*, Eng. Tr., p. 81.

³ Translated into English by Marian Evans (George Eliot).

been renounced. The call of the age was all in the other direction, and, so far as the materialistic side of the movement is concerned, was deepened by two events in the field of science which are landmarks in the history of nineteenth-century thought, and roughly divide it into two periods. These were the experimental demonstration of the conservation of energy, by Joule in 1843,¹ and the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859. Belonging to the first period, which we might call the physical and chemical, we must reckon a group of writers who, with a thoroughgoing theoretic materialism, still seek to combine an idealistic ethics. Probably the best known and most widely influential of this group in Germany were Moleschott and Büchner.

Moleschott's book, *Der Kreislauf des Lebens*, published in 1852, boldly announces that as Feuerbach made a banner of Anthropology the science of man, "the flag will be carried to victory by the investigation of matter and material movement. I have no shame in saying it: the angle round which the world-wisdom of the present time turns is the doctrine of the transformation of matter."²

¹ Anticipated by the German Mayer.

² *Der Kreislauf des Lebens*, p. 363.

The programme develops with rapid and facile steps: "All the capacities which we include under the name of psychical activities are only functions of the brain-substance. Thought" (which he has previously explained as a movement of matter) "stands in the same relation to the brain as the gall to the liver, or the urine to the kidneys."¹ "The will is only the necessary expression of a state of the brain conditioned by external influences."² "Man is the sum of parents and nurses, of place and time, air and weather, noise and light, and clothing. His will is the necessary consequence of all these causes bound to a natural law, as the planet to its path, the plant to its soil."³

By summoning to his aid the conception of force, Büchner was able to give an air of greater subtlety and precision to these ideas, while at the same time, by the popularity of his style, he carried them to all classes.⁴ The old philo-

¹ *Der Kreislauf der Lebens*, p. 402. The last metaphor he borrows from Vogt's *Physiological Letters* (1847).

² *Ibid.*, p. 414.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 419.

⁴ *Force and Matter* was published in 1855. In a few years it ran through many editions, and was translated into many foreign languages. English edition edited by J. F. Collingwood, 1864. The quotations in the text are from the 14th German Edition, 1876.

sophy is discounted at the outset: "Expositions which are not intelligible to an educated man are scarcely worth the ink they are printed in."¹ It is "an infantile playing with words and ideas. Only let it be translated into another language and not much of it will be left."² Not in any "idea," but "in matter, dwell all natural and spiritual potencies; in it alone they manifest themselves. Matter is the foundation of all being."³ If it is a crude error to say that thought is matter, this is only because it is force. "What we call spirit, thought, the faculty of knowledge, consists of natural, though peculiarly combined, forces."⁴ And (criticizing Vogt) "Thought, spirit, soul, is nothing material, but the unified complex of different forces—the result of a co-operation of many material elements endowed with powers or characters and exhibiting a definite highly-complicated kind of motion."⁵ To nature or the universe as a whole we can attribute no moral quality. "Nature is neither cruel nor loving, neither kind nor hard-hearted; it is simply law-abiding."⁶ Yet this does not prevent Büchner from attributing moral value to

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. xvi.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 47.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 201.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 226.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 68.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 154.

the part of nature we call human action. "Not fear, but insight, should rule mankind; not selfishness, but devotion to universal ends is moral."¹ The time, in fact, to raise the question of the compatibility of these hastily-extemporized speculations with the whole moral order of the world had not yet come. Materialism was content to rest its ethics on the humanistic tradition it had inherited from Idealism. But it was not surprising that this element in its teaching, which had shrunk to little more than a hesitating note, should fall into the background in the popular mind, and that the theory should be in danger of being taken by the practical mind of the age in all its crudity as a justification of what it would like to believe as to the chief ends of life, individual and national, and as to the methods by which these were to be achieved. That something like this actually happened in Germany seems evident from the grave misgivings the prevailing spirit roused in the mind of some of the most thoughtful contemporaries. "Everything," said Ranke, "is falling. No one thinks of anything but commerce and money."²

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 163.

² The passage is quoted by Professor Hicks (*Hibbert Journal*, October, 1914), along with the better-known

III.

DARWINISM.

It was in the second of the periods mentioned in the last section that the bearing of the new philosophy on ethics and politics became a burning problem. This was one of the main issues raised by the Darwinian controversy. Is the theory of natural selection to be pressed into the service of materialism? If so the temptation will be to take the struggle for existence as just the missing-link required to connect the life of man with the natural order and bring it within the scheme of triumphant mechanism. Blind struggle for life will be exalted into the position of the supreme law of life. It will be held to apply equally to the higher and lower orders of creation. It will be the supreme arbiter of the destinies of societies as of individuals. From this it will follow that any "artificial" modification of it must be fraught with danger to the physical and mental fitness of the race, and the way will be opened for political and social reaction. On

one from Mommsen: "Have a care lest in this country, which has been at once a power in arms and a power in intelligence, the intelligence should vanish, and nothing but the pure military State should remain" (*cf.* W. H. Dawson's *Evolution of Modern Germany*, p. 3).

the other hand, if we are free to interpret the new order of facts on their own merits and in the terms of a more comprehensive philosophy, it will be possible to treat the struggle for existence as only one among other agencies in development—a natural tendency, like gravitation, to be used in the service of human life. At the lower levels of existence before the dawn of intelligence, it may be possible to see in it the dominant factor, as in the case of plants, where millions of seeds perish for one that survives. But as we advance in intelligence it may very well be that it is gradually superseded by the power of organizing the environment so as to secure the survival of the species with a growing economy. When we come to civilized society, it may be possible, consistently with the maintenance of a high level of physical and mental fitness, to reduce it in its crude form to a minimum, substituting for it a rational selection according to the *kind* of life that it seems desirable to propagate, whether within societies or in the relations of societies with one another.

If we turn to Darwin himself, there is nothing to connect him with the former of these interpretations. On the contrary, passages could be quoted to prove that he has distinctly repudiated it :

“With highly-civilized nations, continued progress depends in a subordinate degree on natural selection, for such nations do not supplant and exterminate each other as do savage tribes. . . . The most efficient causes of progress seem to consist of a good education during youth, whilst the brain is impressible, and of a high standard of excellence, inculcated by the ablest and best men, embodied in the laws, customs, and traditions of the nation, and enforced by public opinion.”¹

And again :

“Important as the struggle for existence has been, and still is, yet as far as the highest part of man’s nature is concerned, there are other agencies more important. For the moral qualities are advanced either directly or indirectly much more through the effects of habit, the reasoning powers, instruction, religion, etc., than through natural selection.”²

This has, on the whole, been in growing degree the view taken in England. In Germany, on the other hand, the seed fell on

¹ *Descent of Man* (Ed. 1901), p. 220.

² These passages from the *Descent of Man* and that which follows are quoted by Karl Pearson, in his *Chances of Death*, i. 127-8. I agree with his criticism of Haeckel. His own conclusions are just the social naturalism idealism rejects.

ground prepared by a quarter of a century of materialistic thought. Whether it is the one generally accepted by biologists it would be difficult to say. At any rate it was the one adopted by the most distinguished follower of Darwin of his time in Germany.

"The theory of selection teaches," writes Ernst Haeckel, "that in human life, as in animal and plant life, everywhere and at all times, only a small and chosen minority can exist and flourish, while the enormous majority starve and perish miserably and more or less prematurely. . . . The cruel and merciless struggle for existence which rages throughout all living nature, and in the course of nature *must* rage, this unceasing and inexorable competition of all living creatures is an incontestable fact; only the picked minority of the qualified fittest is in a position to resist it successfully, while the great majority of the competitors must necessarily perish miserably. We may profoundly lament this tragical state of things, but we can neither controvert nor alter it. 'Many are called, but few are chosen.' This principle of selection is nothing less than democratic; on the contrary, it is aristocratic in the strictest sense of the word."¹

¹ *Freedom in Science and Teaching*, Eng. Tr., p. 93.

Had this been an academic opinion as to the social tendencies of Darwinism without specific application to ethics and external politics, it would have had little significance in the present connection. But it was the view underlying the writer's *Riddle of the Universe at the Close of the Nineteenth Century*, which was published in 1899, ran through several editions in two years, and has been spread broadcast in the "pocket edition" of 1909. It contains a remarkable chapter on "Our Monistic Ethics," in which naturalism comes to grips, not only with popular Christianity, but with all forms of idealistic ethics and politics, and marks the last stage in the development we have been following in this section.

"The supreme mistake of Christian ethics, and one which runs directly counter to the Golden Rule, is its exaggeration of love of one's neighbour at the expense of self-love. Christianity attacks and despises egoism on principle. Yet that natural impulse is absolutely indispensable in view of self-preservation; indeed, one may say that even altruism, its apparent opposite, is only an enlightened egoism. Nothing great or elevated has ever taken place without egoism, and without the passion that urges us to great sacrifices. It

is only the excesses of the impulse that are injurious. One of the Christian precepts that were impressed upon us in our early youth as of great importance, and that are glorified in millions of sermons, is: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." It is a very ideal precept, but as useless in practice as it is unnatural. So it is with the counsel: "If any man will take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." Translated into the terms of modern life, that means: "When some unscrupulous scoundrel has defrauded thee of half thy goods, let him have the other half also." Or, again, in the language of modern politics: "When the pious English take from you simple Germans one after another of your new and valuable colonies in Africa, let them have all the rest of your colonies also—or, best of all, give them Germany itself." And, while we touch on the marvellous world-politics of modern England, we may note in passing its direct contradiction of every precept of Christian charity, which is more frequently on the lips of that great nation than of any other nation in the world. However, the glaring contradiction between the

theoretical, *ideal*, altruistic morality of the human individual, and the *real*, purely selfish morality of the human community, and especially of the civilized Christian State, is a familiar fact. It would be interesting to determine mathematically in what proportion among organized men the altruistic ethical ideal of the individual changes into its contrary, the purely egoistic "real politics" of the State and the nation."¹

A passage like this speaks for itself. It is possible, of course, to exaggerate the influence even in Germany of speculative views of this kind, but I would have you consider what the effect on the mind of our own less speculative nation would have been if words like these had been sent broadcast in the name of Darwin or even of Huxley as the last word of the century on the principles of human life and of international ethics.

IV.

EGOISM.

I have said enough to show the process by which thought in Germany had come full

¹ *Riddle of the Universe*, ch. xix., "Our Monistic Ethics." Eng. Tr., McCabe (1900.)

circle in the course of the nineteenth century. It is true that the general result of the Kantian teaching was sufficient to prevent a return to the naïve materialism and the still naïver naturalism it had displaced. But Kant was difficult, and the central point of his doctrine, both in theory and practice, had been consistently missed, with the result that we have, first, a re-establishment of the materialistic point of view as a matter of theory, and, secondly, the gradual infiltration of the materialistic spirit into the reading of human life. But this result was reached in a more direct way along another line which in this chapter of origins we cannot afford to ignore.

Side by side with the development of the materialistic element in Feuerbach's philosophy there rose out of the disturbed times that preceded the revolutions of 1848 a violent reaction against the humanitarian ideas with which Feuerbach had sought to combine it. "My first thought," Feuerbach had announced, "was God; my second was Reason; my last was Man." But if, as he held, God and Reason were mere abstractions, why not also Man? And if so, what was left to put in the place of all of them but the one sure fact of the Self? These were the questions raised in a remarkable book

which appeared in 1845 under the title of *Der Einzige und Sein Eigenthum*, by Max Stirner.¹

Life, it teaches, is a perpetual combat with things which everywhere are a challenge. We are pledged to get at the back of them. It is here we find our safety and courage. At first our conflict is with concrete things and persons. We have conquered when we find the power of spirit, thought, and conscience in ourselves. But with this discovery comes a new enemy in the abstract ideals we form to ourselves—truth, freedom, humanity. "To bring to light the pure thought to be of its party is the delight of youth." But "with this I who have just now found myself as spirit lose myself at once." Delivery comes only with the discovery of the corporeal self—the living flesh and blood person. This is the birth of true personal egoistic interest, the interest not only of our spirit but of total satisfaction. "As I have found myself behind all *things*, so I must find myself behind all my thoughts—their creator, owner." This is the law of individual life, but it rules also the course of civilization.

Greek civilization stands for the childhood

¹ The *nom de plume* of Caspar Schmidt. Born Bayreuth, 1806; died Berlin, 1856. Eng. Tr., *The Ego and his Own*, by Steven T. Bryington (Fifield, 1913).

of the race. It represents the naïve interest in natural earthly things and relations, country and city, household and family. Christianity stands for the youth. Here all old things have passed away. Fatherland disappears. The Christian is a stranger on the earth. The family and its rites (as asserted by Antigone) are a passing thing. "Let the dead bury their dead." We seek a city which is above. But with this, too, the human spirit has drifted into the void. Love has become a quite general love, a love not of men but of man. "To have a liking for the corporeal man 'with hide and hair' is treason against the truth and purity of Christian love." Against this youthful delusion and the piety to which it seeks to subject mankind, it is useless to assert the rights of Man. Man and human justice, like God and righteousness, are mere ideas—ghosts and spooks of the brain, bringing with them only a new slavery. Still less is deliverance to be sought in Socialism. To invest all ownership in the State is only to rivet our chains. In losing your rights as against the State you lose yourselves. "My rights are what I can master. Whatever interferes with this is my enemy. As enemy of myself, of my *ego*, I therefore count every form

of community. "To neither man nor State do I owe anything at all, and therefore I offer it nothing. I use it only—that is, I annihilate it, and put in its place the society of egoists." If asked where this militant egoism is to lead, Stirner gives the answer familiar to us in some modern syndicalists. It is not his concern. "You might as well ask me to cast a child's nativity. What a slave will do as soon as he has broken his fetters you must—await."¹

I have dwelt on this strange book partly because it may help you to realize that the phase of thought represented by it, eccentric and subversive as it may appear, is no isolated phenomenon, but part of a widespread movement of revolt against the philosophy of life embodied in Kant and Hegel. It differs from the general movement in that it carries the attempt to escape the arresting hand of the Idea of the Whole in thought and practice to its extreme, which I have also suggested is its logical issue. But the special interest of the book at the present time consists, of course, in the remarkable anticipation it contains of Nietzsche's doctrine of the Superman, and the demand for a "transvaluation of all values" beyond all current standards of good and evil

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 344.

in terms of it. "What's good? What's bad?" cries Stirner. "I myself am my own concern, and I am neither good nor bad. Neither has any meaning for me."¹ So close is this resemblance that a leading Spanish writer on Nietzsche² has maintained that of "the contradictory and chaotic mass of Nietzsche's ideas and statements that which to-day impresses us with the greatest force—apart from the admirable beauty of the form—is the portion which finds its precedent in the most radical, anti-social, and subversive work which the last century produced."

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

² Professor Escartin, quoted by Mügge in his *Nietzsche, his Life and Work*, p. 345. Yet there seems to be no evidence that Nietzsche had read Stirner.

LECTURE IV

THE PHILOSOPHY OF MILITARISM

"War is the father of all and the king of all; and some he has made gods and some men, some bond and some free."—HERACLITUS.

WE have traced the course of the revolt from what we might call the "spirit of the whole"¹ in German philosophy. Yet one thing was wanting. While denying the principle of unity in thought and practice, the writers we have reviewed honour it in their own doctrines. They seek, at any rate, to render a coherent, self-consistent account of the universe as they conceive it. Even the apparent madness of *The Ego and his Own* has its method.² Their appeal is to reason and the idea of an intel-

¹ See B. Bosanquet's *Principle of Individuality and Value*, p. 23: "The spirit of totality is the clue to reality, value, and freedom."

² Stirner's English sponsor claims for his philosophy the rigour of an algebraic equation (Introduction, p. xv). If you could conceive an algebraic equation gone a little mad the description would be accurate.

ligible universe. Their trust is in logic, and not in the violence of paradox. It was left to Nietzsche to take the last step in revolt in the denial of the very form of reason and sound doctrine. In him we may say the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

I.

NIETZSCHE.

The leading ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche¹ are fairly familiar in this country. They have recently been canvassed in many books and articles in their bearing on the present crisis.² We are here concerned with their relation to the general philosophical movement, of which they are the climax.

His own initiation into philosophy—"his fire-baptism"—was through Schopenhauer in 1865.³ Thenceforth he stood with the great pessimist in open rebellion against the whole

¹ Born at Röcken, near Leipzig, in 1844, Professor of Philology in Bâle, he was only gradually drawn to philosophy. He began to suffer from brain trouble in 1876, gave up public work in 1878, and died in 1900.

² See especially Mr. Barker's fine appreciation in Nietzsche and Treitschke (Oxford Pamphlets).

³ See Mügge's *Nietzsche, his Life and Work*, p. 29.

philosophy, which sought for the type of reality in the organizing work of the mind. "The mind," he declares, "counts for us only as a symptom of relative imperfection and weakening of the organism as a stage of experimenting and feeling about and missing our aim."¹ Our true life, and with it the truth of the world, is to be looked for, not in experiences, that in his own phrase have been "sifted through with reason," but in the dark, unconscious, and instinctive elements of our nature. From this it follows that our so-called motives and intentions are only a superficial play of consciousness—"everything good is instinct." And, further, that whatever seems to involve consciousness, more particularly all social life, must fall outside the true nature of the individual."² "The doom," says William Wallace, in reference to this phase of Nietzsche's thought,³ "of intellectualism and rationalism could not be pronounced more clearly."

Nietzsche here goes beyond Schopenhauer, and allies himself with Stirner in interpreting these fundamental instincts in terms of the

¹ *Antichrist*, § 14.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Lectures and Essays on Natural Theology and Ethics*, p. 517—the best criticism of Nietzsche of which I am aware.

individual *ego*: "At the risk of displeasing innocent ears, I submit that egoism belongs to the essence of a noble soul. Aggressive and defensive egoism are not questions of choice or of free will, but they are fatalities of life itself."¹ But again he goes beyond the author of *The Ego and his Own* in declaring the central impulse of the *ego* to be neither life as the biologists, nor enjoyment as the philosophers teach, but power.

"A living being seeks above all to discharge his strength. Life itself is the will to power. It is this that every man in his inmost heart desires—to assert himself against the world without, to appropriate, injure, to suppress, to exploit." "Exploitation belongs to the nature of the living being as a primary organic function. It is a consequence of the intrinsic will to power."² From this side, too, the superficiality and provisionalness of communal life emerges. Stirner had rejected it in all its organized forms as simply the enemy of the individual. Nietzsche's resentment is of a subtler kind. Society protects the individual. It stands for "the police, the penal code." But this merely means it is for behoof of the weak against the strong, the mass against the

¹ *Beyond Good and Evil*, § 265.

² *Ibid.*, § 259.

true individual ; and thus its strength is turned to weakness. For the mortal sickness of the age, the sign of its decadence, is precisely this willingness to exchange the unchartered freedom of the individual to "live dangerously," according to his nature, for the slave's portion of security and low-grade, gregarious well-being represented by Christianity and the democratic State.

But it was not so always. Primitive morality recognized a wholly different standard of values. The good man is, in Carlyle's phrase, the cunning or canning one—the enterprising, foolhardy, astute, and rapacious one. History has been the periodical flashing out, and again the clouding over, of the fundamental will-force. It showed it at least once rising into worthy form in the Roman Empire, only to fall a victim to the vampire of Christianity. A ray of light came with the Renaissance, but Luther again brought darkness on the earth. But "vengeance only lingers. False values and fatuous words bear a fate with them. Long it slumbers and waits, but at last it comes and awakes and devours and engulfs. . . . Behold these tabernacles which these priests have built themselves. Churches they call their sweet-smelling caves. . . . Who created them ?

Was it not those who sought to conceal themselves and were ashamed under the clear sky? Only when the clear sky looks again through the ruined roofs and down upon grass and red poppies on ruined walls will I again turn my heart to the seats of this God."¹

The instrument of this healing vengeance is to be one like Napoleon, who can stamp the age, as the great Corsican for a moment stamped his, with the image of power, "under the pressure and hammer of which a conscience shall be steeled and a heart transformed into brass to bear the weight of the new responsibility."

It is by some such steps as these that Nietzsche arrives at the idea of the Superman, who is sometimes conceived of as an individual deliverer, a new lawgiver, who will descend from the lightning and the cloud, and "engrave new values on new tables," sometimes as the new race that will gradually emerge from the new order of ideas. The danger is that, when the Superman appears, he should be captured by the old false philosophy and sublimated as Kant tried to sublimate Frederick the Great into a servant of the people. It is for this

¹ *Thus spake Zarathustra*, ii. 26. The doom is here clearly pronounced on more than intellectualism.

reason that there runs as a recurrent strain through Nietzsche's writings the necessity of stamping out the last remnants of the "Tartuffian philosophy" of Königsberg—the philosophy of the will to good—and substituting for it the true gospel of the will to power.

In the same light, finally, we must read the recurring pæans in favour of war. None of the world-old pleas for it that have been recently revived are absent: War consecrates States; war purifies them; war is the remedy for the maladies of nations; war barbarizes, and therefore naturalizes; war is the sleep of civilization—man emerges refreshed from it; all that pacific nations invent as a substitute for war—mountaineering, sailing, discovery—only show it to be more necessary, lest by culture a nation or a civilization should lose its culture; war, in a word, is its own justification. "Ye say it is a good cause which halloweth even war. I say unto you it is the good war that halloweth every cause."¹

I have described one side of Nietzsche's teaching—the Nietzsche, we might say, of the Nietzscheans. But perhaps, as in the case of Schopenhauer, there are deeper notes, which, as a man's true followers are seldom to be

¹ *Zarathustra*, i. 10.

found among his imitators, we must seek for elsewhere. To find them we should have to begin at the end of his philosophy and work backwards to the beginning. Nietzsche had a vision of a type of man partly, perhaps, the inverted image of his own weakness, in whom all the fulness of body and spirit dwells, clear-seeing, high-thinking, free, unobstructed, active, creative, through whose veins the best that human life has achieved "spreads undivided." He has a vision of him in a world responsive to his claims, maintaining and furthering him at his best—all things working together for good. On the other hand, he seemed to see in actual fact a being tragically limited in body and in mind, before whom there stretch, not the "Cyclopean roads," "the rainbow and the bridges of the Superman," but only blank obstruction from the habits, acquiescences, base inertias and contentments of ordinary humanity—everything, in a word, which Nietzsche summed up in the word "decadence." ("The thing," he tells us, "that has most profoundly engaged me is the problem of decadence.") Even what goes forward in the name of progress and democracy is for the most part the substitution of weakness for strength, caprice for firm persistent will, mediocrity for merit.

To force these entrenchments, what is necessary, in the first place, is a new form of courage—a hardening and a closing of the heart to the present, a softening and an opening of it to the future. For the race, as for the individual, the law holds, "Die to live." Our sin is not that we love and pity, but that we love the near instead of the distant, to-day instead of to-morrow. And, in the second place, a new type of temperance and vigilant self-discipline—"It is my desire to naturalize asceticism."¹ "To set one's life at stake on the impulse of the moment has little worth." To have any value, all our impulses "must first be sifted through reason."

Follow him along lines like these, and you should clearly arrive at something bearing a far closer resemblance to the idealism he rejected than the naturalism he simulated. We might even, with William Wallace, find in his last writings, "full of a terrible pathos," reason to hold that Nietzsche was on his way, "by an inverted path, to the old Greek doctrine of man's essential divinity."²

But it must be admitted that these notes for ears trained in another music were difficult to

¹ *The Will to Power*, § 195.

² *William Wallace, op. cit.*, p. 539 *et seq.*

catch, and that Nietzsche himself did his best to drown them by the violence of his paradoxes.

Yet even on the level of the lower interpretation, it would be difficult to find in his teaching anything that could be taken as an incentive to a policy of national violence. On the contrary, it would be easy to find much that condemns it. It has been pointed out by the writer of "The New German Theory of the State" in *Why we are at War*, that "in his later years Nietzsche revolted against the Prussian military system." But he was never enamoured of it. So early as 1871 we find him deeply disturbed by the spirit that was being fostered in the nation by its military successes. Developing the theme in *Unseasonable Contemplations*, in 1873, he warns Germany against the error of supposing that the success of 1870 was due to anything that could be called German Culture. "A great victory," he writes, "is a great danger. The greatest error at the present is the belief that this fortunate war has been won by German Culture. At present both the public and the private life of Germany shows every sign of the utmost want of culture." The same note is struck in 1889, when, in *The Twilight of the Idols*, he complains that "There are no longer German

Sin philosophers. This nation has arbitrarily stupefied itself through alcohol and Christianity. German seriousness, profundity, and *passion* in intellectual matters are more and more on the decline. The State and civilization are antagonistic. Germany has gained as to the former, but lost in regard to the latter. Education has been vulgarized and utilitarian, and has lost its high aim." It would scarcely be too much to say that his ideal approximated to Kant's, of a new non-national or super-national type of civilization, rather than to that of the idolizers of any particular nation. "Nations," he tells us, "are something artificial at present and unstable"—wisely adding, "such nations should most carefully avoid all hot-headed rivalry and hostility." "In Europe at least," he hoped, "the barriers between different nations would disappear more and more and a new type of man arise—the European."¹ But these were reservations which, along with the whole modifying philosophical atmosphere that accompanied them, it was only too easy to overlook.

Let them drop out of view ; let Nietzsche's *ego* be interpreted in terms of the nation and clothed with the power of the State ; let it

¹ *Human, All-too-Human*, § 8.

come to be taught in high places with all the fervour of prophecy that it was from the loins of the German nation that the Superman was destined to appear, while upon its chief enemies in the direction in which its hopes were set decay had already set her mark ; finally let it be announced with all the authority of expert knowledge that the hour was about to strike, and it is not difficult to see what the harvest of this long sowing was likely to be.

II.

REAPING THE WHIRLWIND.

Not the least of the tragedies of my story, as everyone now knows, is that there had risen up as the last in a long line of national historians and military specialists writers and teachers who were prepared to accept and give currency to the Philosophy of Power in its barest and most cynical form.

Had my subject been "German History in Relation to the War" the change of historical perspective, and the contrast between the spirit of the older and the younger historians, could probably have been shown to be not less striking than the change and the contrast in

philosophy.¹ Be this as it may, the meeting of the two currents of Prussianized history and materialized philosophy in so striking and powerful a personality as Heinrich von Treitschke² is a fact of first-rate importance for the understanding of the deeper causes of the present crisis.

From the first Treitschke placed himself in violent antagonism to South German particularism. "I am longing for the North," he writes from Freiburg, "to which I belong with all my heart, and where also our fate will be decided." And again, "If I am to choose between the two parties I select that of Bismarck, since he struggles for Prussian power for our legitimate position in the North and Eastern Sea."³

Already in 1866 Bismarck had marked him out as the man to further his designs against Austria in literature and the Press. Treitschke

¹ When I wrote this I had not seen G. P. Gooch's *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century*. See his chapter on "History in Prussia" written before the war.

² Born of Czech ancestry in Dresden in 1834, Professor of History at Freiburg, Kiel, and Heidelberg successively, appointed to the Chair in Berlin University in 1874, Treitschke died in 1896.

³ *Treitschke, his Life and Work* (Allen and Unwin, 1914), p. 18.

knew himself to be "a thousand times more patriot than historian." He held also that "even one's good name is to be sacrificed to the Fatherland"; but he added, "only to the Fatherland," and to his lasting credit he refused the brilliant proposal.¹ But when at last, in 1874, he was called to the Chair of History in Berlin, he felt that the time and opportunity had come, and set himself with all the forces at his command to rouse his country to a sense of the destiny that awaited it. We have seen the vision which the spokesman of the ruling classes in Prussia in the same place in the twenties had of the mission of the German nation. The contrast is a tempting one to dwell upon, but it is sufficient here to mention it in the words of a sympathetic English witness. After describing the crowded audiences of princes, statesmen, soldiers, diplomats, and leaders of society which he addressed with natural eloquence, which made them feel there was nothing he would not dare for his opinions, Professor Cramb asks what they came together to hear? and he answers:

"They came together to hear the story of the manner in which God or the world-spirit, through shifting and devious paths, had led

¹ *Treitschke, his Life and Work*, p. 28.

Germany and the Germans to their present exalted station under Prussia and the Hohenzollern—those great princes who in German worth and German uprightness are unexampled in the dynasties of Europe and of the world. Treitschke showed them German unity and therefore German freedom lying like the fragments of a broken sword, like that of Roland or of Sigurd or the Grey-Steel of the Sagas; and these fragments Prussia alone could weld again into dazzling wholeness and might.”¹

But this was only one side of Treitschke’s teaching. He supported it with Lectures on Politics, in which the changed spirit that had come to pervade the philosophy of Germany since Hegel occupied a similar place stands out with even more startling clearness.

In one thing he was in agreement with Hegel’s teaching. The lesson, we might say, of the State and the Nation had in the meantime been learned—some would say overlearned. “The State,” says Treitschke, “is primeval and necessary. It has existed as long as there has been history, and is as essential to humanity as language.”² But here agreement ceases.

¹ *Germany and England*, p. 89.

² *Politics*, i., § 1, vol. i., p. 13. Selections from Treitschke’s *Lectures on Politics*, by Gowans, p. 8.

For the rest we have a vehement reassertion of doctrines of which the whole Idealist movement had been the denial.

Hegel, as we have seen,¹ repudiated the doctrine that the State was founded upon force. It rested on the disposition and the will of the governed. On the contrary, fiercely announces Treitschke, "The State is in the first instance power, in order to maintain itself. It is not the totality of the people itself, as Hegel, in his deification of the State, assumed. . . . On principle it does not ask how the people is disposed; it demands obedience."²

With Aristotle, Hegel held that the State came into existence for the sake of life, its abiding purpose was the good life,—the life of science and literature, of art and religion. "The State," glories Treitschke, "is no academy of arts; if it neglects its power in favour of the ideal strivings of mankind, it renounces its nature and goes to ruin."³

If art is incompatible with politics, religion is at open enmity with it. It starts from an opposite principle: "Religion wishes to know

¹ Above, p. 36.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 32 (Gowans, p. 12).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 34 (Gowans, p. 14).

only what it believes, the State to believe only what it knows."¹ It demands a form of organization with which no State which has any respect for its true basis can hold parley. "The ideal of a religious fellowship is the republic." But as "the State is in the first instance power, its ideal is undoubtedly the monarchy, because in it the power of the State expresses itself in an especially decided and consistent way."² True—real monarchs are becoming scarce, even in Germany. "Prussia alone has still a real monarch who is entirely independent of any higher power,"³ and who is prepared to say with Gustavus Adolphus, "I recognize no one above me but God and the sword of the victor."⁴ But that is a fault that can be remedied by extending the benefits of Prussian monarchy, as Treitschke generously desires to do, to other less favoured lands.

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 323 (Gowans, p. 66). This I take to be a parody of Hegel's statement: "The State is that which knows" (*Philosophy of Right*, § 270 n.). Hegel's own view is condensed in the sentence: "Since ethical and political principles pass over into the realm of religion, and not only are established but must be established in reference to religion, the State is thus furnished with religious confirmation."

² *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 162 (Gowans, p. 89).

⁴ *Op. cit.*, i. 37.

The instrument of this idealistic extension is War. "It is precisely political idealism that demands wars, while it is materialism that condemns them."¹ While Treitschke is not slow to reproduce from Nietzsche the usual commonplaces on the merits of war,² in no part of his teaching does one miss more the wider outlook of the master. In a remarkable passage, Nietzsche refers to the strictness with which public opinion in Germany forbids any allusion to the evil and dangerous consequences of a war, but in the true spirit of the rebel takes this only as a challenge to put them in the strongest light. He marks as the secret of Prussian victories severe military discipline, natural bravery, and sustaining power, superior generalship, unity, and obedience in the rank and file—"factors which have nothing to do with culture"; and gives warning that if this idea of culture be permitted to grow and to spread, "it will have the power to extirpate German mind; and when that is done, who knows whether there

¹ *Op. cit.*, i. 74.

² He lays particular emphasis on its remedial qualities. It is the divinely appointed medicine for ailing nations. As the result of the Napoleonic wars is said to have been to diminish the average height of the French nation by some five inches, it seems to be what the doctors call a reducing medicine.

will still be anything to be made out of the surviving German body?"¹ Treitschke knows well enough that war is only a means: for its justification it must be for some cause. The cause, in his view, is the spread of the German idea of civilization—German Culture. But when we inquire wherein this culture consists, it is precisely the factors which Nietzsche rejects, and the State organization which is required for the maintenance of them that are made by him the head of the corner.²

Equally sinister is his view of international law and of treaty obligations. We have seen that the older idealism takes its stand on the idea of the moral governance of the world, giving the lie to all theories that draw the line of the moral order at the frontiers of States. The view that the supreme duty of the State is the maintenance of its own power, is clearly incompatible with any such doctrine and to the hopes of internationalism founded upon it. Of treaties in general, Treitschke insists that "they are all concluded with a mental reservation, *rebus sic stantibus*."³ This might only mean that, like all other contracts,

¹ *Thoughts Out of Season*, David Strauss, § i.

² See *op. cit.*, Books III. and IV., *passim*.

³ *Treitschke, his Life and Work*, p. 166.

treaties between States are subject to the rules of equity, and may, under certain circumstances, be denounced or carried out as the altered circumstances permit, so as to preserve their spirit. This is not Treitschke's meaning. The chief circumstance he has in view is that of the relative strength of the contracting parties. It is this that a State must follow out regardless of everything else, seeing that "the renunciation of its own power is for the State in the most real sense—the sin against the Holy Ghost."¹ If it fails by threats to intimidate the treaty State, the moment has come for "legal proceedings"—the Treitschkean phrase, not for arbitration, but for war.²

A fortiori the principle puts an end to the ideal of any effective check on war through the extension of International Law. That there is a place for it Treitschke does not doubt. But the only principles which may claim to be fixed are those concerning formal and ceremonial rules which have play in times of peace.³ For the rest, its greatest successes have been won "in a field which those who are fools look upon as barbarous—the domain of

¹ *Politics*, i. 134.

² *Treitschke, his Life and Work*, *loc. cit.*

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 165.

the laws of war.”¹ But to seek to apply it to the limitation of the right to declare war is a vain and degenerate dream. Here “no State in the wide world can venture to relinquish the *ego* of its sovereignty.” It is only questions of third-rate importance that it can afford to submit to arbitration.² Even in the case of the laws of war Treitschke leaves us in no doubt as to the inverted standard he is ready to apply. Speaking of the occupation of Eastern Prussia by the Russians, he reminds us how President Dolma did his best to work against the enemy by carrying off the receipts and taxes to the lawful King, and asks: “Shall that be forbidden in the name of humanity? Is not patriotism in this case a higher duty? It matters little whether a Russian, embittered by this kind of resistance on the part of good and honest Prussians, burns a few more villages than he at first purposed in his knoutish mind. That is a consideration of far less importance than that a nation should keep the shield of its honour bright. The moral possessions of a nation ought not to be destroyed in the name of humanity by international law.”³

It is impossible not to recognize and even

¹ *Treitschke, his Life and Work*, p. 170.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 169.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

admire the strain of idealism—albeit arrested and fore-shortened—in this typical figure. It is not that he loves his country too much, but that he loves humanity too little, and therefore cannot love his country aright.¹ Even so we should do him injustice if we failed to catch here and there a note of another kind. Material power could not be the ultimate appeal to a writer who held that “a power that treads all right underfoot must in the end itself perish”; and who knows how to appeal to the greatness of the human race on behalf of “the rich diversity of kindred peoples”?² But again it was the misfortune of this teaching to find favour in a class of writers trained to even a narrower outlook, in whom every softening trait has disappeared.

The works of General von Bernhardi are by this time fairly familiar to English readers. In the best known of them³ a few of the more

¹ What good, for instance, would it be to his country to lose his own fair name? See above, p. 83.

² *Op. cit.*, i., § 3. Cf. v., § 27.

³ *Germany and the Next War*, First Edition, 1911 (on the occasion of the Moroccan controversy); Sixth Edition, 1913 (with the motto “War and carnage have done more great things than love of neighbour. Not your pity, but your bravery, has hitherto saved the unhappy ones. What is good? you ask. To be brave is good,” from Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra*). Eng. Tr. Powles, 1913.

uncompromising and oracular of the aphorisms of the *Lectures on Politics* are seized on to serve as the background of the gospel of war. For the rest, his aim is to convert the vague aspirations of his master for a larger Germany into a call to be prepared to "stake all on all"¹ in the cast for "world-power or downfall."

A great deal has been said by the apologists for Germany of the obscurity in his own country of this writer, and of the repudiation of his philosophy of war by the educated classes even in Prussia. It is, indeed, only what we should expect, and an altogether hopeful sign that such ideas should come as a shock to all wholesome thought and feeling. But that is not the point. The books of Bernhardi and the seven hundred other military specialists who, according to Professor Cramb, annually inundate the Press in Germany, are written for the military schools of the country, and you would no more expect to find them on the book-shelves and drawing-room tables of the ordinary educated man than you would expect to find Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* or Hegel's *Logic*. The point is that these ideas have been taken up by the ablest of the specialists who exercise a powerful influence

¹ Preface to Sixth German Edition.

on the current of events, and made by them the philosophical background of their science and their politics.

It is not my business here to discuss the truth of these ideas. By their fruits ye shall know them. Philosophy, I have already claimed, is justified—or condemned—of her children. My task has been to show that they are not the offspring of what is commonly known as German Philosophy, but, on the contrary, are the legitimate issue of a violent reaction against all that German Philosophy properly stands for. Having done this as my time permitted, I might here close, but I may perhaps be forgiven if I add something on two heads, partly by way of reminder, partly of application.

III.

THE ROOTS OF MILITARISM.

I have maintained that owing to causes partly intellectual, partly economical, partly political, Materialism in our own age has made itself particularly at home, and developed its most fatal consequences in Germany. But it would be a mistake to suppose that it is confined to Germany. Most of the writers I

have mentioned—more particularly Büchner, Haeckel, and Nietzsche—have been translated into English among many other languages, and have had phenomenal popularity in this country. To this we have added a materialistic and naturalistic literature of our own, the spirit of which has eaten deeply into the mind of our time. At the present moment we are reaping the fruits of it in the lyrical strain in which war is defended as the guardian of the supreme qualities of courage and self-sacrifice. If the eulogies of it, which occupy so large a space in some of our great daily newspapers and monthly magazines,¹ fail to convince the mass of right-thinking people, they cause a widespread feeling of uneasiness, and are profoundly disturbing. This, I believe, is the result of two main causes : first, the prevailing uncertainty as to the real social and political significance of Darwinism ; and secondly, a quite genuine concern for the moral fibre of the nation, which seems to many to have suffered deterioration from a prolonged period of peace. For this state of things I know no remedy except a far more determined effort at

¹ See, e.g., *Nineteenth Century and After*, September, 1914, "God's Test by War," by Harold F. Wyatt ; and leading article in the *Morning Post*, December 26, 1914, on "War the Reformer."

clear thinking as to the true place of natural selection as a factor in human progress, and a far more active exercise of the imagination in realizing what is implied in the calls of modern life.

I have already indicated the lines along which the solution of the first of these problems must be sought. The clue, I believe, is given in the first of the passages quoted above from Darwin himself, where he points to the growing importance as a factor in progress under modern conditions of what modern biologists have called "social," as contrasted with biological "inheritance"—the invisible world of social habits, ideals, affections, expectations, and confidences into which it is the chief function of a true education to raise the natural individual. It is here that Darwinism, rightly interpreted, joins hands with the Idealism it is thought to have superseded. There is no point on which we have still to learn more from the social philosophy of Kant and Hegel than the substantial reality of this spiritual inheritance, which we are called on to hand on in a more fully organized and "rational" form, "leaving it not less but greater and nobler than it is now entrusted to us."

The ethical argument in favour of war,

founded on the fear of the disappearance of the tougher qualities in human nature owing to lack of opportunity, is not, as Nietzsche saw,¹ to be met by pointing to the artificial substitutes which advanced civilization provides in sport and mountaineering, travel and adventure. These, along with scientific discovery, are, after all, for the few, and require their devotees to seek ever remoter fields. Even the more dangerous ordinary employments—mining, fishing, sailing, doctoring—though engaging far more of the inhabitants of the earth than the largest armies ever put into the field, and showing no evidence of diminishing danger and hardship, may be said to be by themselves an insufficient answer. But is not the mistake which we here commit to look to the exceptional at all, instead of to the preparation of all our faculties, bodily and spiritual, and the concentration of mind that are required, and more and more required under modern conditions, to accomplish any piece of work according to any decent standard of efficiency? And, again, to forget the qualities of heart and mind that, in the growing complexity of our intellectual world, are required to live up to any decent standard of cheerful confidence and

¹ Above, p. 79.

faith? Ruskin has himself said as much in praise of war as any English writer,¹ but it was he who said in the same essay :

"There is truer duty to be done in raising harvests than in burning them, more in building houses than in shelling them, more duty in honest and unselfish living than in honest and unselfish dying. To be heroic in danger is little. To be heroic in change and sway of fortune is little. To be patient in the great chasm and pause of loss is little. But to be heroic in happiness; to bear yourself gravely and righteously in the dazzling of the sunshine of morning; not to forget the God in whom you trust when He gives you most; not to fail those who trust you when they seem to need you least—this is the difficult fortitude. . . .² All the duties of her children to England may be summed up in two words—industry and honour."³

These last words suggest the question as to whether, after all, even ethically, the peculiar virtues of war are not something of an anachronism. Each age, as Paulsen, one of the band of Germans who has kept the force of idealism alive, reminds us, has its own cardinal

¹ See *The Crown of Wild Olive*, "Lecture on War."

² *Op. cit.*, p. 167 (condensed). ³ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

virtue. The virtue of the ancients was martial courage, of the Middle Ages chivalry. In the modern world it is industry or perseverance, "the courage of Working Man."¹ Who will say that industry, properly interpreted, demands less of us than either of the others, and not rather that it demands all that they demanded and more besides? If it be said it is all so slow and dull, may it not be asked in reply whether this is not just the point? That sturdy Oxford Hegelian, T. H. Green, used to say that "one of the chief trials of life was its slowness." What modern courage is called on to face is not, as in war, the storm and the whirlwind with their grandeur and romance, but what William James has called the steady "drizzle" of small inconveniences, discomforts, annoyances, depressions, and despondencies. Even in modern warfare itself, in the case of the vast majority of those who are either directly or indirectly engaged, it is doubtful whether it is not this virtue, under particularly exciting conditions, that is mainly called for.

¹ Paulsen's *Ethik*, p. 386.

IV.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE WORLD.

I would remind you, in conclusion, that the militarist philosophy is no new thing. It is as old at least as the age of the Sophists in Athens.¹ And as it is not new in theory, neither does it appeal for the first time in practice to "the judgment of the world." Before this court, as before the other, it has been judged, not once, but many times—from the battle of the Harbour of Syracuse where the power of Athens itself fell, to the field of Waterloo. If it is now judged once more, and if there is truth in the story of these lectures, we shall be able to point for confirmation of the judgment of history, not to the superiority of any philosophy of ours, but to the better mind of Germany itself—the mind that found its highest and most condensed expression in the philosophy, not of the Will to Power, but of the Will to Good.

What a general return to this mind would bring to the solution of the political issues,

¹ See, e.g., Plato's *Gorgias*, p. 483.

which, under any circumstances, must be faced at the end of the war, no one, of course, can tell. But there is one suggestion which seems to me excluded by what I have called the "Spirit of Wholeness." It was said, I think by Bebel, that the cohesion of the German Empire has not yet been tested by disaster, and there are some who look forward to its disruption as the outcome of the present war. I believe, on the contrary, that the union of the German nation is a great, though as yet incomplete, achievement, and that it would be treason to the idea of nationality if we shared this hope. But to hope for the dissolution of the German Empire is one thing ; to hope for its reconstitution on a basis of a truer freedom as conceived by the wisest reformers of a former generation is quite another. Could the nation be convinced that no injury or unwarrantable restriction of her legitimate expansion was meant by any European Power there is nothing to prevent, and every reason to hope for, a return to the ideals of an earlier and saner age.

But it is with the change of mind that we are here concerned, and as to this at least, one who is conscious of an inestimable debt to German philosophy, may perhaps be allowed

to express his own hope in the words of our philosopher poet :

“ My own hope is a sun will pierce
The thickest cloud earth ever stretched ;
That after Last, returns the First,
Though a wide compass round be fetched.
That what began best, can't end worst,
Nor what God once blessed prove accurst.”¹

¹ R. Browning, *Dramatis Personæ*, “ Apparent Failure.”

NOTE ON IDEALISM AND CHRISTIANITY

THE foregoing has shown, I hope, that what has been called the "new barbarism" has its roots, not in the idealistic philosophy, but in the materialistic dogmas that have come to take its place as the background of the thought of the governing class in Prussia. But it may still be asked how, more precisely, the earlier thought is related to the central ideas of Christianity. The question was raised in its acutest form by the poet Heine in a celebrated passage at the end of his *Religion and Philosophy in Germany in the Nineteenth Century*. Those who have quoted the passage as a singularly accurate prophecy of what is now taking place ignore the fact that it is a prophecy, not of external aggression, but of internal revolution in Germany. Yet the challenge it contains is so germane to the subject of these lectures and to the whole intellectual outlook at the present moment, that I have ventured in this note to

carry the argument of the text a step farther than some readers might care to follow it.

The question takes us to the roots of Christianity itself. I have quoted as an example of Frederick the Great's "universalism"¹ his summary of Christian ethics under the golden rule. But the rule is equivocal, and naturalism has not been slow to take advantage of the ambiguity to assimilate it to its own egoistic principle. Stated in the negative form, "Do not that to another which thou wouldst not have done to thyself," it can be read as a maxim of mutual distrust and timidity. Just in this form Hobbes had no difficulty in accepting it as a summary of his *Laws of Nature*.² It is otherwise with the great central paradox of the first Gospel: "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life shall find it."³ Spiritual life, it would say, is a constant dying to the natural. No step can be taken in it which does not involve a break with the merely immediate—an arrest of mere instinctive self-assertion. But it also teaches that the prize is not less but more life. The self dies, but it dies to live at a new level of fulness. The mistake of naturalism is not that it would make the self an end and a

¹ See p. 21.

² *Leviathan*, chap. xv.

³ Matt. xvi. 25.

law to itself, but it takes the self at the level of mere natural impulse and feeling. Ethically this was of course no new discovery. It had been anticipated by the best Greek philosophy. What Christianity did was to proclaim it as the universal law of spiritual life, both human and Divine. In its central doctrine that God is Love it proclaimed the truth that only in the redemption of the world could the Divine nature itself completely reveal itself, and this redemption required the supreme sacrifice and suffering. It may be said that here, too, there was an anticipation in Plato's repudiation of the Greek conception of the jealousy of God.¹ But subsequent Greek philosophy remained unresponsive to this note, and drifted into Stoicism—the ethics of conflict rather than reconciliation, of law rather than love.

If we agree to accept this rough statement of the central principle of Christianity, and turn to Kant, we can see that he seized at least the negative factor in it. All value is moral value, and moral value depends on the acceptance of the law of the mind, and the subordination to it of all that is merely natural, accidental, and external. In his own words, the only absolutely good thing is the

¹ *Timæus*, p. 29, E.

good-will. Gifts of nature and of fortune are valueless "if there is not a good-will to correct their influence upon the mind, and with this also to rectify the whole principle of acting, and adapt it to its end."¹ Finely as he works out this idea, he was prevented by the dualism he made between nature and spirit from seeing that the opposition was relative, and that the spiritual was realized, not simply in the negation, but in the transformation, of the natural, and this defect tended to ally him with Stoicism rather than with Christianity. It was just here that Hegel's "realism" enabled him to take the necessary step. The newness of life to which the spirit rises does not consist in simply renouncing the natural, but in transforming it. The world of nature is not merely "other" to the spirit, but is the field of its reconstructive work. But Hegel did more than correct the onesidedness of Kant's moral rigorism. He showed how this correction was rooted in the nature of self-conscious life itself. What makes the difference between the animals and man is that man can distinguish between himself and his object. He can recognize the world as something standing opposed to him. But he knows also that the opposition is only

¹ *Metaphysics of Ethics*, § 1.

relative and apparent, and that already in its being an "object" to him there is the promise of victory over it. All knowledge is in this sense a conquest of the world. But the process is no simple matter, it is only achieved at the price of renunciation and denial. First impressions and instinctive beliefs have to submit themselves to the test of logical coherence, in the course of which they are transformed and find their completion in a world of thought. Like the Kingdom of Heaven, the kingdom of knowledge can only be entered *sub persona infantis*. Such, too, is the nature of a being that thus can make everything, even its own self, into its object—that there is nothing into which it cannot find entrance—in which it cannot find itself at home. This doctrine of the infinity of spirit has been a stumbling-block to Hegel's critics. But it is only an extension to the field of knowledge of the claim of religion that "all things are ours"; that there is nothing that can happen to the soul, not even death itself, which may not be turned into a means of its fuller self-expression.¹ As religion lives in the conviction that there is nothing that can say to the soul "hitherto shalt thou come, and no further," so science and philosophy find in every

¹ Cf. Rom. viii. 35-39.

check and apparent limit to knowledge only a challenge, and a starting-point for a new extension of the empire of the mind.

I have said enough to show the general drift of this teaching. I am, fortunately, not called in to follow it into detail. In spite of the labours of some of the ablest thinkers of our time, much remains difficult in it. My concern is to show that, so far as it goes, it is not only in essential agreement with the root principle of Christianity, but points to the only direction in which any satisfactory proof of Christianity can be sought—the discovery that it is no mystical paradox imported from a decadent Eastern religion, but the principle that underlies our commonest experience.


“What is peculiar to Hegel,” writes his chief English exponent, “is that he weighs the vivid poetic utterances of spiritual intuition and the prose of common life and science in the same scales, and that he seeks to prove that, as exact and scientific definitions of the reality of things, the former has a higher truth than the latter. To him, therefore, the great aphorism in which Christian ethics and theology may be said to be summed up, that ‘he that saveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life shall save it,’ is no mere epigrammatic saying, whose

This Universe is 2.

self-contradiction is not to be regarded too closely; it is rather the first distinct, though as yet undeveloped, expression of the exact truth as to the nature of spirit."¹ It is indeed true that such teaching comes, like Christianity itself, with a sword, but it is a sword pointed, not against the spirit of Western civilization as embodied in institutions and structures that have come to have a sacredness greater than human life itself, but against the spirit, to which neither these nor anything else is sacred that stands in the way of its own ruthless assertion of material power.

¹ Caird's *Hegel* (Blackwood, 1883), p. 212.

fore, my brothers take a Vow to rescue
brotheren from pain.



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